Stillwater Lift Bridge Endowment Account

December 2010

Your Destination...Our Priority

Report to the Minnesota Legislature
as required by Minn. Stat. 165.15, Subd. 8

To request this document in an alternative format call 651-366-4718; 1-800-657-3774 (Greater Minnesota); 711 or 1-800-627-3529 (Minnesota Relay). You may also send an email to bruce.lattu@state.mn.us. Adequate notice is required.

Agency Contacts:
Todd Clarkowski, Metro District, Office of Program Delivery
Minnesota Department of Transportation
1500 West County Road B-2, MS 050
Roseville, MN 55113
651-234-7714
todd.clarkowski@state.mn.us

Kristen Zschomler, Office of Environmental Services, Cultural Resources Unit
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Blvd., MS 620
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899
651-366-3633
kristen.zschomler@state.mn.us

Background Summary

Stillwater Lift Bridge Management Plan

The Stillwater Lift Bridge management plan and repair project is a key stipulation in the 2006 amended Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA - Stipulation III) for the St. Croix River Crossing Project. In addition, the Stillwater Lift Bridge is one of 24 bridges identified by the Minnesota Department of Transportation for long-term preservation as part of the agency's statewide June 2006 Historic Bridges Management Plan and 2008 Historic Bridge Section 106 Programmatic Agreement.

The Stillwater Lift Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is also considered a 4(f) resource under the USDOT Act of 1966. Its conversion to use as a bicycle/pedestrian crossing as part of the proposed loop trail has been documented during the St. Croix River Crossing Project in letters of agreement between Mn/DOT and the city of Stillwater.

The St. Croix River Crossing Project also documented the recommended landscaping and amenities in the Visual Quality Manual, including recommendations for the Stillwater Lift Bridge.

To complete stipulations agreed upon in these various agreements, Mn/DOT's Bridge Office, Cultural Resources Unit, Metro District, a consultant team and the Stillwater Lift Bridge Advisory Committee completed a condition assessment and a bridge operations and maintenance manual for the Stillwater Lift Bridge and its concourse. The approved Operations and Maintenance Manual aided in the development of the Stillwater Lift Bridge Management Plan.

The Stillwater Lift Bridge Management Plan, completed in 2009, describes how the Stillwater Lift Bridge is to be managed during its interim vehicular use and after its conversion to pedestrian/bicycle use. It also establishes the priorities for a repair project in order to allow the Stillwater Lift Bridge to function with the proposed loop trail. The Stillwater Lift Bridge Management Plan can be found at http://www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/liftbridge/.

Timing of the Stillwater Lift Bridge Repair/Conversion Project

As part of the MOA and Statewide Historic Bridge Management Plan, Mn/DOT commits to completing a rehabilitation project for the Stillwater Lift Bridge within one year of opening the new bridge as described in the 2006 Supplemental Final EIS for the St. Croix River Crossing Project. Mn/DOT & Wisconsin DOT will cover the cost of Lift Bridge conversion up to $7 million.

The Stillwater Lift Bridge - past, present and planned future use as a bicycle/pedestrian facility.

Stillwater Lift Bridge Endowment Account Narrative

The MOA for the St. Croix River Crossing Project contained stipulations related to the Stillwater Lift Bridge, including establishing a $3 million endowment account by Mn/DOT and Wisconsin Department of Transportation to cover the routine operations and maintenance costs after the Stillwater Lift Bridge is converted to a bicycle/pedestrian facility following construction of the new river crossing.

In order to establish a Stillwater Lift Bridge Endowment Account, Minnesota legislation was necessary to provide the appropriate authority.

- Proposed as House File 1221 and Senate File 1005 in the 2009 session
- Testimony provided by Mn/DOT at:

House Transportation Committee – March 26, 2009

House Finance Committee – April 6, 2009

Senate Transportation Committee – April 7, 2009

House Finance Committee – April 20, 2009

Senate Finance Committee – May 1, 2009

House Ways & Means Committee – May 4, 2009

The 2009 Minnesota Legislature passed and the Governor signed HF 1309, which established the Stillwater Lift Bridge Endowment Account as Minn. Stat. 165.15.

Recent Activities

Since passage of this legislation in 2009, Mn/DOT has implemented planning activities based on recommendations in the Stillwater Lift Bridge Management Plan. Work includes developing environmental documents for two upcoming Lift Bridge projects; a stabilization project scheduled for FY2013 and a conversion project being planned to follow the completion of the St. Croix River Crossing Project.

On Oct. 15, 2010, the National Park Service issued a new Wild and Scenic Rivers Act evaluation and determination for the proposed St. Croix River Crossing Project. That evaluation and determination indicated that the National Park Service does not approve the St. Croix River Crossing Project and that other federal agencies cannot assist in the project. Congress could approve the project if it chooses to do so under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

As a result of this recent National Park Service determination, certain activities for the St. Croix River Crossing Project are suspended while others nearing completion will be finalized. Pending a Congressional act, funding for the Stillwater Lift Bridge Endowment Account is suspended, as is work on the environmental document for the Stillwater Lift Bridge Conversion Project. The environmental document for the Stabilization Project will be finalized.

No revenues have been deposited into the Stillwater Lift Bridge Endowment Account by Mn/DOT or Wisconsin DOT, and detailed revenue and expenditure information on the account does not yet exist.

For a complete status of the St. Croix River Crossing Project, please visit the project website at: http://www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/stcroix/

Estimated cost of preparing this report

In accordance with Minn. Stat. 3.197, the estimated cost of preparing this report is $2,000.